



STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING AND TOUR

Joint Meeting. The State Soil Conservation Committee met with the [Conservation Districts of Iowa](#) on June 20 in Okoboji. The following items were discussed at the joint meeting:

- Vince Sitzmann, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs), reported that all of the Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners are now bonded by the state of Iowa.
- Jake Hansen, DALs, reported that the Iowa Watershed Management Authorities would be receiving funding from a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development grant that is administered by the Economic Development Authority. He also announced that the Missouri River Authority was meeting on June 22 in Onawa and that the Governor would be in attendance to talk to about the achievements made in the past five years after the flooding of the Missouri River.
- Jim Gillespie, DALs, announced that Water Quality Initiative funding for statewide practices would be available on July 1. Priority will be given to farmers that have not tried practices such as planting cover crops or using no-till, strip-till, or nitrification inhibitors.
- Clare Lindahl, Conservation Districts of Iowa, provided an update on the annual conference that will be held in Des Moines on August 29 and 30. She also talked about the Iowa Farm Progress Show that will be held in Boone on August 30 through September 1.
- Kurt Simon, federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), discussed the pollinator habitat project. The project provides financial assistance to landowners to plant milkweed and other nectar-rich plants that attract monarch butterflies. Planting will be on field borders, buffer strips, and in pastures. Mr. Simon also discussed easement problems that the NRCS has been having with the Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. Simon stated that the Corps is buying easements from the NRCS and then ignoring the reason for the easement and pushing soil into waterways. The problem has occurred with projects in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska.
- Mike Hawkins, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), discussed water quality issues with shallow lakes. Issues included the lack of aquatic vegetation, sediment problems, and [zebra mussels](#).

Committee Meeting. The State Soil Conservation Committee met after the joint meeting to approve the budget request totaling \$61.6 million for the Soil Conservation Division that will be presented to the Secretary of Agriculture. The budget request included:

- Water Quality Initiative - \$30.0 million
- Agriculture Drainage Wells - \$4.5 million
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - \$2.5 million
- Conservation Reserve Program - \$2.0 million
- Farm Demonstration Program - \$650,000
- Watershed Protection Fund - \$2.7 million
- Soil Conservation Cost Share - \$10.0 million
- Soil Conservation Administration - \$7.5 million
- Urban Conservation - \$1.1 million
- Loess Hills - \$600,000

Tour of Okoboji Area. On June 21, a tour was held with stops at the following:

- [Jones Dairy Farm](#) in Spencer. The farm has 900 Jersey cows that produce 6,500 gallons of milk each day. The Dairy owns 1,000 acres of farmland and plants 800 acres of corn and 200 acres of alfalfa that is used for silage.



Nancy Jones, of Jones Dairy, answers a question from Vince Sitzmann.

- Denny Winterboer farm in Milford. Mr. Winterboer discussed the importance of improving soil organic material that will improve crop yields. He explained the benefits of using earthworms in the soil.
- [Gull Point State Park](#). Tim Richey, DNR Park Manager, talked about the popularity of the park and how the usage increases economic activity for the surrounding communities. He also talked about some of the challenges at the park that include limited camping facilities for large recreational vehicles, maintenance, and problems with zebra mussels.
- [Silver Lake Fen State Preserve](#). The group stopped to see the fen located near Silver Lake. A fen is a series of spring-fed boggy and hilly wetlands. The Preserve is a 10-acre area containing three fens. The largest fen is over an acre in size and is on a mound of decomposed peat that is approximately 15 feet deep.
- Arco Dehydrating Company in Lake Park. The manager, Lance Heikens, explained the history of the company that began in 1947. The company grows and purchases alfalfa that is hauled, dried, and made into animal feed pellets.

Additional Information. For additional information about the State Soil Conservation Committee, please refer to the [website](#).

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